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ABSTRACT

This article examines the current national conversation on educational-leadership preparation and practice and the implications of these conversations for educational-leadership preparation. The text focuses on the rhetoric and research surrounding two issues that have been identified as major contributors to the present leadership crisis: the shortage of qualified administrators and the lack of adequate leadership preparation. The article examines the repeated alarms about the scarcity of candidates for school and school-system leadership positions and asks whether this shortage is real or illusory. An examination of administrator licenses awarded in California and Texas indicate that an ample supply of administrators is being produced. However, it appears that many of these license holders are not seeking administrative positions for various reasons. Part of the reason cited for this stagnation is the lack of proper leadership preparation, and universities are bearing much of the criticism for this perceived problem. What has been shoved to the periphery of the debate are earlier identified problems underlying the shortages, such as long hours, high stress, poor pay, and micromanaged positions. The article emphasizes the need for university educators to join the debate on school leadership and share their knowledge about best practices in educational leadership. (Contains 46 references.) (RJM)

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Who is Framing the Nation's Understanding of Educational Leadership Preparation and Practice?

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Who is Framing the Nation's Understanding of

Educational Leadership Preparation and Practice?

In August of 2001 the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds sponsored a conference on educational leadership at Manitou Springs, Colorado. The conference, which was attended primarily by practicing administrators, foundation leaders, policy makers, and leaders of educational organizations, was organized around the question: "What will it take to get better leadership in American public schools to improve student learning?" For those who consider themselves stakeholders in K-12 education, this question has been examined with increasing frequency and taken on increased importance.

Indeed, the fall Calendar of 2001 was awash in meetings focused on the future of educational leadership. In September, the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP) planned to hold a meeting on the future of educational leadership preparation, and in October both the Land Grant Deans and Affiliated Private Institutions organization, the Danforth Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education focused meetings around educational leadership and the development of school and school system leaders. Groups that previously had very little interest in educational leadership issues, such as the Eli Broad Foundation, the American Association of Colleges of Teachers Education (AACTE), the Gates Foundation, and the National Business Roundtable, have also increased their attention on school and school system leadership. The Eli Broad Foundation, for example, developed a collaborative initiative with Michigan's Governor Engler to establish an Urban Superintendents Academy. Additionally, AACTE has recently developed a task force on

educational leadership preparation and created a strand within their national conference focused on leadership issues.

What has brought this increased attention to educational leadership? For the most part, educational reformers have ignored the role of school and school system leaders, despite effective schools research that demonstrated the key role leaders play in effective educational change. In contrast, teacher education has endured intense scrutiny from a discontented and dissatisfied public. The situation for teacher education has not changed in recent years either. For example, the Ablee Foundation (www.ablee.org), the Hoover Institute (web site) and the Manhattan Institute (web site) have recently lambasted the preparation pre-service teachers receive in higher education. They have argued, in turn, that the research used to demonstrate a positive relationship between teacher certification and high student performance is flawed, that students taught by Teach for America recruits outperform those taught by traditionally trained teachers, and that alternatively trained math teachers are more successful with high school seniors than traditionally trained teachers.

Although the criticisms of educational leadership have yet to reach the level or frequency of those aimed at teacher preparation, educational leadership and leadership preparation are no longer immune to the critical gaze of their public. Thus far, we have seen little research that discredits educational leadership preparation. However, sweeping condemnations of educational leadership preparation programs are plentiful. Highly critical articles in newspapers like the New York Times and Education Week and in journals like the Kappan and Educational Leadership have become increasingly more common. Similarly, the content of national meetings of representatives of foundations, business, government and practice typically involves criticism of traditional higher education preparation of school and school system leaders and/or the support

of alternative preparation programs. Moreover, it appears that current popular opinion of university-based educational leadership preparation is being swayed by such criticism, and we may not have to wait much longer for work like that of Kate Walsh (2001) from the Ablee Foundation leak over into educational leadership. Walsh, who claims she reviewed every study that has been published on teacher certification and teacher quality, could easily conduct a similar study of educational leadership preparation. Moreover, given the lack of research that has been conducted on the relationship between leadership preparation and leadership quality, someone like Walsh would likely come to conclusions not unlike those the Ablee Foundation has been successfully communicating to policy makers and opinion leaders: 1) the available research which demonstrates a positive relationship is flawed and outdated, 2) course work requirements for teacher certification should be eliminated, 3) principals should be allowed to hire anyone with a bachelors degree who can pass a subject matter exam, 4) public schools should be given the responsibility of ensuring that teachers have the instructional skills and knowledge needed to teach.

One very interesting characteristic of the budding national conversation around school leadership is that it is taking place primarily outside of contexts in which educational leaders practice and are prepared. For example, the Eli Broad Foundation's initiative with Governor Engler has been developed without any input from university preparation programs. This situation begs the question, who is framing the nation's understanding of educational leadership preparation and practice? If the authors of recent education-focused editorials or the invitation list for the U.S. Department of Education's national meeting on educational leadership are any indication, then our answer would be business, government, foundations, and to a lesser degree professional associations. Although, many educational leadership professors and programs are

engaging in program reform and enhancement (e.g., incorporating problem-based learning, collaborating meaningfully with practitioners, realigning courses, using cohort groups, requiring student portfolios), few have engaged in recent national conversations on educational leadership. Indeed the contributions of professors and practitioners to this national conversation are rare and thus relatively ineffectual.

In this article we examine the current national conversation on educational leadership preparation and practice and the implications of these conversations for educational leadership preparation. We focus specifically on the rhetoric and research concerning two issues identified as major contributors to our current *leadership crisis*: the shortage of qualified administrators and leadership preparation. Based upon our assessment of this literature, we then make the case for increased involvement in the national conversation by educational "insiders[1]."

The National Conversation

When one reviews the content of conversations, meetings and reports of those groups who are framing the national conversation around school leadership, one finds that a new pressing problem is eating away at the nation's PK-12 schools, particularly at student achievement: *a crisis in leadership (*cite the Wallace Report). According to groups like the Wallace Foundation, there appear to be two major contributors to this crisis: 1) the shortage of school leaders and 2) the preparation of school leaders by schools, colleges and departments of education.

The Leadership Shortage

One need only scan the education literature to notice recurring alarms focused on a perceived (or perhaps real) shortage of candidates for school and school system leadership positions. An *exploratory study* conducted by the National Association of Elementary School

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Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) investigated the disturbing evidence that schools lacking qualified candidates to fill principal vacancies have become commonplace (ERS, 1998). Even national news magazines, like US News and World Reports, have covered the proposed shortage of school leaders (Lord, 2000).

Before delving into a discussion of whether or not there appears to be a shortage of school and school system leaders, we believe that a review of the consequences of such rhetoric is instructive. Since the late 1990s, when the identification of a shortage of school leaders again entered the national educational discourse, there has been a literal explosion of new administrative preparation programs both in and outside of university contexts and there has been major growth in programs that offer "fast-track" degrees. To illustrate, the Wallace Foundation has just granted New Mexico State University funding to develop a border superintendent's program, an ex-federal education aide developed an alternative program to prepare school principals in Chicago (Brown, 2000, p. 6), and as noted previously, the Eli Broad Foundation and Michigan's Governor Engler have developed a leadership academy for urban superintendents. Moreover, a nationally recognized urban university has recently announced a program for preparing principals consisting of six 3-credit courses. Many states have eliminated or reduced requirements for leadership licensure, and the size of existing preparation programs has increased substantially. Indeed, some programs, that five years ago prepared around 30 school leaders per year, now prepare close to 300 students for school leadership each year (Young & Petersen, 2002). According to Fullan (2001) we must resist the pressure to increase our numbers without first insisting on increased standards and criteria for recruitment, selection, and rigorous and relevant preparation programs. "We can't solve the problem of producing better leaders by attempting to produce greater numbers " (p. 135).

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Although it is difficult to fully assess the impact of the above-described developments, we foresee that they will likely do more harm than good to the quality preparation of school leaders. However, not everyone sees it this way. For example, in an editorial posted on the online newsletter, the Education Gadfly, Chester Finn referred to licensure and accreditation as "hoops, hurdles, [and] input controls" and argued that they did little to ensure effective preparation or practice in schools. Moreover, many have argued that increased competition from private and non-profit alternative certification programs will force university preparation programs to improve. According to Young and Petersen (2002) the idea behind this argument is that those seeking licensure in educational leadership, being critical consumers, will choose a program that they believe will best prepare them for school or school-system leadership (e.g, SAI, 1997). Needless to say, this argument is quite similar to that of school choice, and as is the case in parental choice of schooling, selection of programs by consumers is rarely based upon valid measures of quality.

Regardless of the consequences of the shortage discourse, the claims that there is a shortage have become commonplace (Chey, 1998; Houston, 1998;Tryon, 1996; Villanueva; 1997).[2] Perhaps, then, the first question we must pose is "what exactly is the nature of this particular *crisis in school leadership*?" Is it primarily a perceived shortage or is it real? And if it is real, is the issue one of quality, quantity or both? Without a doubt, the issue of the proposed administrator shortage is complex.

To illustrate, California is one state where claims of a leadership shortage are rampant. In a recent survey of 376 superintendents surveyed in California (Campbell, 2001), 90 percent reported a shortage in the pool of candidates for the last advertised high school opening, 84 percent reported a shortage of middle school candidates, and 73 percent reported a shortage of

elementary school candidates. The membership of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) state that ten years ago, every principal opening resulted in 20-30 applications. Today, personnel departments feel fortunate if they get 8-10 applications. However, a recent examination of data collected from the California Commission of Teacher Credentialing indicated that 9,254 educators received administrative certificates in 1999-2000 (Kerrins, et al., 2001). Tracing back to 1998-1999, 7,260 certificates were issued and 7,503 certificates issued in 1997-1998. The total number of schools in California approximates 8,300, translating to an administrator supply that could provide one new principal for each school each and every year.

A similar situation exists in the state of Texas (Creighton, 2002). The number of administrator certificates (Principal and Superintendent ExCET Tests Passed) issued in 2000-2001 equaled 1,854. In academic year 1999-2000, Texas issued 1,741 administrator credentials; 2,565 in academic year 1998-1999; and 1,439 in academic year 1998-99 (Texas Education Agency, 2002). While it would appear that Texas, like California, would have ample qualified administrators to serve its 1,100 districts and approximately 6,000 schools, state leaders argue this is not the case. So what happened to all of those individuals who received training and licensure in educational administrators? Though we do not know the exact number, we have reason to believe that in California, Texas, and a number of other states a very large number of educators with administrative credentials have remained (for whatever reason) in non-administrative positions (Andrews & Grogan, 2001; Campbell, 2001; ERS, 1998; Glasman, Cibulka, & Ashby, 2001; Young & McLeod, 2001; Young, in press). How do we explain this apparent discrepancy?

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A plethora of recent research clearly identifies factors responsible for many potential candidates choosing non-administrative positions (Andrews & Grogan, 2001; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2001; ERS, 1998; Young, Petersen, & Short, 2001). Underlying factors discouraging potential applicants include: (a) pressures of the job, (b) testing and accountability, (c) excessive community and board micro-management, and (d) lack of job security. Unfortunately, much less research has been focused on identifying factors beyond those of individual choice (e.g., discrimination) that have contributed to the proposed shortage of school administrators.[1]

In addition to the gap between those who are certified to fill leadership positions and those who actually seek and are hired for such positions, a distinction has been created between those individuals who are merely certified and those who are actually qualified to lead schools and school systems. This brings us to the second major contributor to the *current crisis in leadership*: preparation.

The Preparation Of School Leaders

In our review of the literature on the shortage of school leaders, we found that universities bear a great deal of criticism for the predicted shortage of qualified school leaders (Creighton & Jones, 2001; Young, Petersen & Short, 2001; Young, in press). Calls for radical reform are heard from political leaders as high up as our Commander in Chief, community and policy makers, and even from our own ranks. For example, James Guthrie, the Chairman of the Educational Leadership department at Vanderbilt University, and Ted Sanders, the Chief Executive of the Education Commission of the States, recently wrote:

> Over the past quarter century, university preparation of educational administrators has fallen into a downward spiral dominated by low-prestige institutions, diploma mills,

[1] Exceptions, that we know of, include Young and McLeod (1991) and Young (in press).

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> outmoded instruction and low expectations. Many of these sub-par training programs have virtually no entrance requirements, save an applicant's ability to pay tuition. The doctor of education (Ed. D.) degrees they confer have lost their salience. In former times big-league education leaders tended to be graduates of institutions like Harvard, Yale, Duke or the University of Chicago. This is no longer true. . . . Today's conventionally prepared superintendent is more likely to have come from East Appalachia State, San Franciseo State or literally hundreds of other public institutions that began as normal schools and politically bootstrapped themselves to graduate degree status. (Guthrie & Sanders, 2001)

Moreover, we are well-aware of the many private philanthropic organizations staging an assault to produce more and better school leaders on their own. According to Murphy (1999) critical analysis of educational leadership preparation has become almost a cottage industry.

The inclusion of leadership preparation with other contributing factors to the predicted shortage presents an interesting twist to the national conversation. Once leadership preparation was introduced into the conversation, other factors associated with the shortage (e.g., inadequate compensation, longer working days and school years, increased job related stress, and a lack of job security) moved from the center of the national conversation to the periphery. Preparation (e.g., quality, accessibility, cost) became a key issue for solving the leadership shortage and for addressing the development needs of future school leaders.

Among those groups that have contributed to the national conversation on school leadership are the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISSLC), the National Policy Board in Educational Administration (NPBEA), the Institute of Educational Leadership (IEL), the Wallace Readers Digest Fund, the BellSouth Foundation, the newly established

National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP), the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), and the U.S. Department of Education. There are of course many other organizations that have contributed to the national conversation (e.g., the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation); however, given the length limitations of this article we will concentrate our remarks on the above sources.

In recent years "higher standards" has become a rallying cry for reform-minded educators. In educational administration a broad coalition of constituencies developed the ISSLC standards for school leaders and have had a strong impact on the national conversation concerning leadership preparation. The ISSLC standards have been adopted or adapted as part of the state licensure requirements for school leaders in over 30 states. In some of these states, the ISSLC standards are being used to review programs that prepare school leaders, and perhaps more significantly, they were recently adapted by a NPBEA working group for the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education's (NCATE) accreditation reviews of college and university educational leadership preparation programs. Although, some faculty are dissatisfied with the standards and critics question the degree of impact the standards have had on preparation, the ISSLC standards have clearly impacted the national conversation on leadership preparation. Given the increased importance of technology in education, it is also important to highlight the work of TSSA (2001). This group, while not as highly visible as ISSLC, has developed technology standards for school administrator preparation and practice.

The IEL, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based in DC, has worked to raise public awareness of the critical problems facing school leadership for many years. This organization, while certainly critical of the general state of educational leadership preparation, recognizes the importance of involving higher education in developing higher quality preparation for school and

school system leaders. Their initiatives typically engage representatives from education, government, business, civic groups and other stakeholder groups, and their work is effectively distributed to individuals in positions that can influence change. Among their many initiatives include the development of taskforces around reinventing the principalship and restructuring school district leadership. They argue that the future of preparation must be aligned with updated visions of leadership. With regard to principal preparation, they have argued that preparation programs must be changed to "focus on instructional, community and visionary leadership roles in improving student learning in real schools" (Usdan, McCloud & Podmostko, 2000, p.10), while for district leadership preparation they argue that higher education needs to "work with district leadership to develop hands-on, reality-based preparation and professional development programs" (Usdan, McCloud, Podmostko & Cuban, 2001, p. 25).

As described in the introduction to this article, the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds has been extremely active in the national conversation on educational leadership. From the time that it first announced its interest in educational leadership, however, it has taken a rather hands off approach to university educational leadership preparation programs. Most of its partnerships are with groups that do not represent the traditional preparers of school and school system leaders, and the foundation's national meetings are more likely to be attended by practicing administrators, foundation leaders, policy makers, and leaders of educational organizations, than by educational leadership faculty.

Although the Wallace Foundation has tended to focus its resources on projects that are disconnected from traditional university preparation programs, there are exceptions. One recent and interesting example is a grant from the foundation to New Mexico State University (NMSU). This grant enabled NMSU to bring together scholars, practitioners, and lawmakers from Mexico

and the United States to develop a state of the art program for the preparation of border (or bi-national) superintendents. The ability to bring together stakeholders with diverse experiences and perspectives around the common goal of improved preparation for school and /or school district leaders is significant, as it ensures a richer and certainly more comprehensive contribution.

Among other funding agencies, the Bell South Foundation has also taken an interest in redesigning educational leadership preparation and professional development. In 1996 the foundation launched a $1.5 million initiative with the Center for Leadership in School Reform (CLSR) to address the role of school district leadership through a Superintendents Leadership Network (SLN). Their efforts, which focused on school district leaders in the South, resulted in the development of a network of superintendents who embrace their responsibility for student learning and the provision of high quality professional development for these same leaders. The project and its results thus far, particularly from the participants' perspective, are laudable. However, the BellSouth Foundation, like many other foundations, chose to partner with organizations outside of higher education. Moreover, while the foundation's efforts did not link to institutions of higher education, their recent report, *Inspiring Leadership* (Kronley & Handley, 2001), indicates a desire to impact the initial preparation of school district leaders. Once again, we find an organization with limited or no connection to (and likely little knowledge of) university preparation, impacting the national conversation on leadership preparation.

The recently established National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP) was developed with this disconnect in mind. The framers of NCAELP argue that "key to the success of any effort to positively and substantively change the preparation of school and school-system leaders is a commitment among stakeholders to finding

common ground and working interdependently toward the realization of mutually agreed upon goals" (Young, Petersen &Short, 2001, p. 4). They see university educational leadership faculty, school and school-system leaders, state and national professional organizations, and state and national departments of education as essential partners in redesigning the future of educational leadership preparation and argue "as a field we must understand that, with regard to leadership preparation and practice, we are interdependent" (p. 4). NCAELP met for the first time in February of 2002 to discuss the current context of leadership preparation and practice, to define and identify examples of effective practice in preparation and practice, and to develop action plans for supporting the development of quality educational leadership preparation. NCAELP brings an essential new voice to the national conversation on educational leadership preparation, as it draws from major stakeholders in leadership preparation and professional development. This includes practicing administrators, practitioner organizations such as NASSP, NAESP, ASCD, AASA, and NSBA; professors who provide initial preparation; university administrators; university organizations; accreditation; and representatives of organizations that provide professional development.

Also new to the conversation on educational leadership preparation are the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), and the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). In the spring of 2000, AACTE became increasingly concerned about the lack of involvement of higher education in the national conversation on educational leadership. As a result, a task force on educational leadership was formed and developed a monograph that reflected the task force's thoughts on the responsibilities of universities, colleges and schools of education in providing quality leadership preparation. The USDOE, now headed by a former school district superintendent, is another newcomer to the conversation. This group, like others

that have taken an interest in educational leadership, hopes to use leadership as a leverage point in ensuring high quality educational experiences for all children. In the recently released draft of the USDOE strategic plan, the department asserted a need to

> Develop new leadership training models. The nation's educational system is experiencing an acute shortage of highly qualified school principals. The Department will encourage the development of innovative models to transition educators or non-educators into the leadership role. Professional development for existing principals will be encouraged, especially training in research-based instruction and in using data to inform school improvement. (DOE, 2002, p.40)

The USDOE's inclusion of educational leadership and leadership preparation within its strategic plan is significant. Rarely has educational leadership been included within the USDOE's specific realm of interest in previous years.

Where is Educational Leadership in this Conversation?

The focus on and criticism being lodged against educational leadership preparation has provided a ripe opportunity for a number of different interests to impact educational leadership. Although it is unclear what impact each of the above organizations will ultimately have on the approximately 500 colleges and universities and, yet to be counted, alternative programs that provide pre-service educational leadership preparation, it is clear that higher education is not taking a lead in the national conversation on leadership preparation, despite recent efforts. As a result, many conversations and efforts have at their core negative images of traditional university preparation of school and school system leaders and the faculty who participate in such programs.

Indeed it has been suggested that at the core of both the quality (i.e., preparation) and

quantity (i.e., shortage) issues is the traditional university educational leadership preparation program (Young, et al, 2001). While many faculty consider the negative essentializations of preparation programs (e.g., Guthrie & Sanders, 2001) to be unfair overgeneralizations, most agree that there are too many ineffective programs currently operating and thus consider much of the criticism warranted and justified.

However, stroking the brush broadly across all preparation programs ignores the positive and innovative movements within our profession. Indeed many educational leadership faculty have repeatedly called for drastic reform and restructuring of educational leadership preparation (see, for example, Capper, 1993; Culbertson & Hencley, 1962; Lomotey, 1989; McCarthy & Kuh, 1997; Milstein, 1993; Miklos & Ratsoy, 1992; Murphy, 1992; Osterman, 1990; Parker & Shapiro, 1992; Wendel, 1992). Indeed, Murphy and Forsyth (1999) argued "the desire to improve this profession is widespread" (p. 263). Yet, few outside university education leadership preparation circles appear to be aware of the either the discontent that exists among faculty or the reform efforts that have been driven by such discontent.

Recognizing and admitting our weaknesses are crucial and a necessary process in growth and improvement. Equally important is the identification of and focus on the strengths of our profession (e.g., exemplary programs), to ensure that our policy and practice decisions are informed by effective practice and based on accurate and reliable data. As an example, in a 2000 study of the Superintendency (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000), two-thirds of superintendents surveyed believed their preparation programs to be "good" (p. 127). Additionally, of the almost 300 universities belonging to NCATE that offer administration preparation, over 100 are "nationally recognized" for their high-quality programs by both the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) and NCATE. Certainly, these examples are in contrast to the

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national criticism on administration preparation programs. Moreover, Jackson and Kelley (in press), among others, have described and documented a number of examples of best practice in educational leadership preparation that could substantively inform the national conversation on educational leadership preparation. Looking through the *forest* of criticism, *trees* of improvement and quality are visible.

The late President John F. Kennedy once stated "the great enemy of truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived, and dishonest—but the myth—persistent, persuasive and realistic. Too often we hold fast to the clichés of our forebears" (Kennedy, 1962). University leadership faculty have a responsibility to dispel the myth that has grown around the quality of programs that prepare educational leaders, just as they have a responsibility to ensure high quality preparation experiences that enable leaders to support the educational success of all children.

A Compelling Need for Involvement

We must not ignore or underestimate either the potential impact of the current national conversation on leadership or the extent and gravity of the criticism being lodged against educational leadership preparation. Both hold very real consequences. However, few faculty have engaged in the national conversation either to suggest alternative visions, solutions, or approaches or to promote their own program successes. There are many reasons for the silence among educational leadership faculty, one of which is our lack of data linking these reforms to our purpose of producing quality educational leaders (McCarthy, 2001). Our general lack of data not only interferes with the ability to promote programs and their successful production of high-quality leaders to communities, policy makers, business leaders, and journalists, but it also

prevents us from effectively countering the allegations that university preparation for school leaders is inadequate.

That few educational leadership faculty are participating in the national conversation around educational leadership is troubling for several reasons, some of which are related to the very roles they play in leadership departments: scholars, teachers, and mentors. First, many faculty in departments of educational leadership contribute to the development of future leaders through their research. Research that has the potential to significantly improve preparation and practice must be shared more effectively with those who are in positions to impact reform. Second in their role as teachers, many faculty have been involved in reform efforts in their departments, either by themselves or in collaboration with other faculty in their departments. The number of faculty involved in program enhancement efforts is significant, and these faculty have much to offer the national conversation on the future of leadership preparation. Finally in their role as mentors, faculty like practitioners are increasingly aware of the complexity and near impossibility of the jobs of school and school-system leaders as well as the inadequacy of traditional preparation for such difficult positions. Here too, faculty could substantively contribute to the national conversation on leadership and leadership preparation. Unfortunately, few do contribute.

Although few educational leadership faculty have contributed to the national conversation thus far, there is a compelling need for educational administration professors and practitioners to enter the national conversation and contribute their voices and experience to the improvement of educational leadership preparation and practice. The voices from the "outside," be they the Wallace Foundation, the Broad Foundation, and/or local/state legislators, are demanding higher academic standards and greater accountability for success. It is important that

educational leadership respond proactively to these demands, that we contribute useful information, that we listen and seek understanding, and that we participate in designing the future of educational leadership preparation and practice. If we are slow to enter the national dialogue on reform, and if we do not combine our expertise and resources, the danger is not that preparation programs will go out of business – the peril will be the missed opportunity to prepare higher-quality leaders who can have maximum impact on student learning. To allow such an outcome is irresponsible inaction toward our society and our nation's children.

Fortunately, there are increasing numbers of opportunities to become involved in both state and national level conversations. For example, the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP) is seeking widespread involvement from those who prepare individuals for and practice in educational leadership. NCAELP's goal of reinventing leadership preparation to enable school leaders to meet the challenges of the 21st century, and to "guarantee that the new leaders for student learning guide schools and children to success" necessitates the involvement of leadership faculty. Moreover, its goal of developing a program evaluation model that enables both thoughtful program development and the communication of helpful program data to stakeholders provides yet another opportunity for faculty involvement.

Educational leadership faculty must also realize that not all opportunities for involvement come with an invitation. Currently, many states are reconsidering their licensure policies for school leadership. Simply because faculty are not specifically invited to participate in debates regarding state licensure, does not mean that their input would not be helpful and in some cases even welcome. Indeed initiative is often a necessity. Indeed, some opportunities for involvement appear only after initiatives to build relationships and/or organizations have been undertaken. In

Utah, for example, a consortium of practitioners, professors, school board members, and department of education personnel has been set up to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in ongoing conversations and initiatives impacting leadership and preparation in the state. In other states, faculty from preparation programs are developing or reviving educational leadership faculty organizations.

Similarly, long established educational leadership organizations have set in motion more concerted efforts to collaborate. One example is the Higher Education Coalition that the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) and the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) are developing around leadership preparation. Another example is the recent dialogue among NCPEA, UCEA, and the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), around collaborative efforts to improve preparation programs, to improve the quality of the professoriate, and to increase the representation of people of color in educational leadership positions and within the educational leadership professoriate. These organizations and their alliances provide additional opportunities for educational leadership faculty to lend their perspectives and expertise to the national conversation around educational leadership.

We have before us an opportunity to contribute substantively to the national conversation on the future of educational leadership preparation and practice. In fact, we have more than an opportunity; we have a responsibility to contribute. Just as we can tolerate nothing less than quality programs that prepare leaders to support the education of all children, we also cannot leave decisions regarding the future of educational leadership preparation for others to make.

Concluding Thoughts

The last half-decade has shown promising movement toward significant improvements in the ways men and women are prepared for school leadership positions. The recent efforts of many individuals, programs and organizations like NCATE, NPBEA, NCPEA, AACTE, UCEA and ISLLC to actively pursue reform and improvement in educational leadership are to be applauded. However, while there is cause for hope and encouragement, true celebration remains in the distance, as there remains much work to be done. A thorough review of the literature reveals that reform is needed in several major areas: 1) recruitment and selection (Creighton & Jones, 2001), 2) program content, 3) delivery methods, 4) program standards, 5) faculty professional development, and 6) institutional support (McCarthy, 1999; Murphy, 1999; Young, et. al., 2001).

Moreover, criticisms of educational leadership are not dissipating. Indeed, many question whether training in educational administration should be required for principal certification (Brent, 1998). The warning posited by Kerrins et al. (2001), albeit a harsh one, is worth noting here:

> The view taken here is that a steady drumbeat discrediting university programs and fabricating the shortage notion, serves the interests of non-university groups to garner resources going to universities for their own coffers. By pressuring legislatures with erroneous information, these groups intend to lift administrator preparation and training from the universities to themselves. (p. 1)

Though this comment may seem a bit extreme and even alarmist, it makes clear that time has come for university faculty to take an active and participatory role in the national conversation on educational leadership preparation.

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What we have suggested in this manuscript is that if we are to realize the goal of ensuring educational excellence and equity for all children, we must get involved. First, we must focus on preparing high-quality leaders through rigorous, standards-based, theoretically sound preparation programs. To do otherwise is to risk further increasing the number of mediocre candidates with administrative certificates, lacking the knowledge, skills, interest, motivation, and commitment to lead our nation's schools. Second, we must find ways to substantively engage in the national conversation on educational leadership preparation. Within that conversation, we must argue for quality in leadership preparation, we must share what is know about best practice in leadership preparation, we must urge collaboration among stakeholders, and we must insist that all decisions that are made concerning leadership preparation have at their core the interest of our nation's children. In a sense, within the national conversation we must be extremists in our support for quality leadership preparation that ensures the educational success of all children. Indeed, as Martin Luther King once proclaimed "the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. . . . The nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists" (King, 1968).

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Footnotes

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[1] We have heard this term invoked to refer to those individuals who work in educational institutions, such as schools and school districts as well as those who work in schools, colleges and departments of education. The term is used to distinguish such individuals from "outsiders" who presumably have no or limited experiences in educational settings.

[2] It is worth noting that warnings of a potential shortage of educational leaders are not a recent phenomena. Indeed, Goodlad, in his 1983 book, *A Place Called School*, stated: "there is simply not an established procedure in the educational system to identify and groom cadres of the most promising prospects for top positions" (p.48). Moreover, Muse and Thomas (1991) estimated that as much as one-half of all public school principals would retire during the 1990s, and Murphy (1992) reported on the shortage of *quality* educational leaders.

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